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Report of the Commission of Enquiry into Unrest on Sugar Estates in Mauritius, 1937.

PAYMENT BY LABOUR CONTRACTORS.

The complaints examined.

338. We now examine these complaints. There seems to be no doubt that in some cases, at least, the contractor calculates the pay on a shorter measure than that on which the work is done. But whatever the truth in respect to these allegations may be, we have the frank admission of some estate managers that they cannot say precisely what pay the casual labourers get, since they pay the contractor a lump sum for having a piece of work performed and thereafter leave the question of the amount actually paid to the labourers to the contractor; and in some cases estate *sirdars* are allowed by estates to work as contractors, a course we deprecate and which we think should be stopped. We are in no way inclined to recommend the abolition of recruitment of labour through the contractor, in circumstances where it is cheaper for the latter to find the labour, for we are satisfied that the contractor performs a useful service by getting into touch with the labourers. They should, however, be properly licensed. We are satisfied that in certain cases they are not—and this with the connivance of the estate concerned—and should be subject to control by the Labour Department. We think payment should be made in every case by the estate authorities and that the names of all casual labourers should be entered in a book kept for that purpose by the estate authorities, together with the place of residence, age, sex, hours worked and amount of wages paid. We also think that the amount and remuneration for all tasks should be made public by being posted up on a board and that the measurement of all fields should be posted up. We also recommend the abolition of the *gaulette* of various sizes and its replacement by a standard measure of length, which we suggest should be ten feet. If these recommendations are carried out, we think that one of the main causes of discontent among casual labourers will disappear.

INDUSTRIAL ORGANIZATION.

Creation of Trade Unions desirable.

342. We have given this matter our careful consideration and have come to the conclusion that in principle the benefits likely to arise from the creation of Trade Unions in Mauritius will probably outweigh any possible disadvantages, bearing in mind that we are dealing in Mauritius with a relatively illiterate and uneducated body of workers, Indians and Creoles for the most part, whose standard of efficiency, habits, customs and modes of thought are entirely different from those of workers in Great Britain, where the Trade Union movement had its birth.

Real nature of Trade Unionism.

343. Trade Unionism, or the association together of workers employed in any trade or industry for a common object, arises out of a desire on the part of the workers to secure higher wages, shorter hours and better conditions of work by united action. An almost inevitable corollary of Trade Unions is the strike, or organized abstention from work at a moment known to be critical to the financial or other interests of employers, whereby the Trade Unionists hope to force concessions which they find cannot be obtained either by presentation of their demands or collective bargaining. While the strike frequently causes more harm than good, and, in particular, suffering to a large number of people who are in no way concerned in the dispute, it must be frankly admitted that the strike is the only effective weapon the workers have at their disposal to reinforce written or oral demands. It is the counterpart of the lock-out or refusal of masters to employ a number of workmen at a given moment which, it is known, will most injuriously affect the workers. We draw Your Excellency's attention to this aspect of Trade Unionism, for we could not recommend the establishment of Trade Unions and the suppression of the right to strike at the same time by making the latter illegal; but the dangers attendant upon a strike of workers at a stage of industrial development such as that of Mauritius make it necessary that the greatest care be taken when imposing upon a community, consisting of Orientals for the most part, an organization which originated in the highly industrialized conditions of the West and that steps be taken to set up an organization for the peaceful settlement of industrial or trade disputes which should be the counterpart of the Trade Union movement.

Recommendations.

347. We therefore recommend that steps should be taken to ensure the formation of Trade Unions, and that legislation should be introduced into the Council of Government recognizing the existence of Trade Unions. This legislation should contain provisions making Trade Unions subject to the general control and supervision of the Department of Labour, at least during the initial stages of their establishment; for the appointment of a Registrar, who we think should be the Director of Labour; and for

their registration as incorporated bodies, authorized to own property and sue and be sued in their corporate name. The legislation should also provide that accounts should be subject to periodical audit. Provision should also be made for the drawing up of rules for Trade Unions and for penalising the incorporation and operation of a Trade Union not registered within a specified period of time. We also think it desirable, though we make no special recommendation on the subject, that a handbook should be prepared, perhaps by the Director of Labour in the first place, analogous to that prepared by the Assistant Registrar of Co-operative Credit Societies for the guidance of members of Co-operative Credit Societies, in which the object of Trade Unions and their working are explained in simple language. This handbook should be translated into French, Hindi and Tamil.

THE PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT OF INDUSTRIAL DISPUTES.

Recommendation.

352. In many countries Conciliation Boards composed of masters and men have been set up with the object of peacefully composing any difference which may arise. No provision has yet been made in the law of Mauritius for composing any such differences and we recommend that an early opportunity be taken of introducing legislation into the Council of Government to this effect.

THE DEPARTMENT OF LABOUR AND SOCIAL WELFARE.

Creation of a Department of Labour and Social Welfare recommended.

354. It is clear that if the interests of the whole of the labouring classes of Mauritius are to be safeguarded, the present department of the Protector of Immigrants must be abolished and replaced by an up-to-date Department of Labour and Social Welfare. That would mean that such labour organization as now exists would be taken over by the new Department of Labour, and such part of the social services as already exist in the shape of the Poor Law Department should likewise be taken over by the new department and would become the Social Welfare section thereof. We recommend that the new Department be presided over permanently by an English official having thorough experience of labour questions and administration in England. He should be paid such a salary as would attract a competent man. He should be a person of university or professional education; should be well acquainted with French and, if possible, with Hindi and the habits and customs of the Indian labouring classes. We recommend too that he should have two English assistants with similar qualifications though, of course, paid at lower rates. One, at least, of these assistants should be an expert in collecting and classifying statistical information and, if possible, training in statistics should be insisted upon in the case of all three officials.

THE MARKETING OF MAURITIUS SUGAR.

THE MAURITIUS SUGAR SYNDICATE.

Origin of the Mauritius Sugar Syndicate.

359. The Mauritius Sugar Syndicate owes its inception to the intervention of Government in 1918 with the object of facilitating the sale of sugars to the United Kingdom. The principal market for Mauritius prior to the war was India. During the war Mauritius sugar was not unnaturally diverted to the United Kingdom and in order to facilitate and emphasize the process Government, in 1918, appointed a Sugar Sales Committee. This Committee was appointed for twelve months, but towards the end of this period Sir Henry Leclézio called a meeting of the planting community at the Chamber of Agriculture. At this meeting he strongly represented the advantages, from a commercial point of view, which would result from the formation of a body on similar lines. The first Syndicate was accordingly formed in 1919 to deal with the 1919-20 crop. On the expiry of the first Syndicate's term, in view of the good results obtained, it was decided to renew the process of syndication for a period of three years. This covered the period 1921-22—1923-24 and an Ordinance was passed accordingly. It was again renewed, on substantially the same terms, for a period of five years, *i.e.* 1924-25—1928-29, for three years 1929-30—1931-32, for five years 1932-33—1936-37, and again for five years covering the period 1937-38—1941-42. The formation of the Syndicate was designed to co-ordinate the marketing of Mauritius sugars. But as the London brokers bid for these sugars, thus reversing the usual process of trade, it is only partially true to say that it eliminated altogether competition between individual sugar producers. It was not formed wholly with the object of keeping up prices for it did not then include the whole, by any means, of the sugar producers of the island. It does now, under the Ordinance quoted, include all sugar producers for the first time.

The Syndicate an incorporated body.

360. Being an incorporated body the Syndicate may sue and be sued in its own name. Any persons lending money to the Syndicate are by Article 5 of the Ordinance granted a special privilege ranking next to that of the Mauritius Government Railways. Creditors of planters are by Article 6 of the Ordinance precluded from intervening in the transactions of the Syndicate and may not seize sugar in the hands of the Syndicate in settlement of their claims though they may attach sums due to their debtors in the hands of the Committee.

Objects of the Mauritius Sugar Syndicate.

361. The principal objects and powers of the Mauritius Sugar Syndicate, as set forth in a notarial deed witnessing the constitution of the Syndicate, are as follows:—

- (a) The object of the Syndicate is the sale of sugar produced by members or from canes of small planters crushed by members.

- (b) The Syndicate works through a Committee which has power to dispose of the sugar of members of the Syndicate as they think fit.
- (c) The Committee may cash all special preference due on account of sale of sugar for members ; and may acquire special preference certificates on account of members from other colonies not taking up their full share of preference. These sums are divided up amongst members in the form of a bonus in addition to the price actually realised.
- (d) The sugar of members must first be warehoused in the docks at Port Louis after being put in bags. It is then transferred in the name of the Syndicate.
- (e) The Committee may borrow money at such rates and on such conditions as they think fit with a view to making advances to planters on the security of sugar warehoused in the docks. The Committee may also borrow money on the security of sugar belonging to members without their approval.
- (f) Sugar of members is forwarded to the Syndicate through brokers who receive two forms of brokerage ; (1) a brokerage of $\frac{1}{2}\%$ from the Committee on the gross proceeds of their clients' sugar ; (2) a brokerage of $\frac{1}{4}\%$ from purchasers of their clients' sugar upon negotiation of the drafts.
- (g) The Syndicate classifies the sugar of its members into three grades : (1) Grade ' A '—dry white sugar of fine quality ; (2) Grade ' B '—white sugar inferior in quality to Grade ' A ' ; (3) Grade ' C '—sugar usually known as ' Raw '. Grading is carried out by committees or sub-committees consisting partly of members and partly of persons not members of the Syndicate.
- (h) The Syndicate settles with members usually by means of part payment as soon as funds become available from purchasers in England. A final settlement is made when the whole of the proceeds of the sales of the crop have been received. Factories are granted a premium by the Syndicate amounting to fifty-hundredths of a rupee for each fifty kilos of Grade ' A ' sugar manufactured by them either on their own account or on account of planters.

The Syndicate a trust for the sale of sugar.

362. Bearing the objects, as set out above, in mind, we think that the Syndicate may be defined as a trust established for the sale of Mauritius sugar with a view to eliminate competition by sale direct to the Imperial or other markets on the part of individual Mauritius producers. The Syndicate, therefore, takes charge on behalf of its members of all the sugar, that is produced ; and the whole of the producers of sugar, to any large extent, are members of the Syndicate, the sugar of small planters being consigned to the Syndicate through or in the name of the estates to which they sell their canes.

How the Syndicate works.

363. In practice, the sugar is sent in sacks from the factory to the docks where a dock receipt is given in respect to each consignment. The Syndicate then takes delivery of all such sugar, arranges for its sale and export abroad and collects the proceeds of the sale. Finally, it distributes the net amount received amongst members of the Syndicate as settlements are received from abroad and in proportion to the quantity of sugar supplied by each of the members. The Syndicate also advances funds to its members, borrowing money from the local banks for that purpose and charging them interest at the rate of 5 per cent. This rate has been reduced from 5½ per cent. with effect from the 1st December 1937. Whenever a member of the Syndicate wishes to obtain an advance he can do so upon producing a dock certificate showing that sugar has arrived in his name and has been transferred to the name of the Syndicate, the advance being debited to the current account of the borrower with the Syndicate. As the proceeds of the sale in London are received by the Syndicate, *prorata* payments are made amongst members, and those who are indebted to the Syndicate on account of advances have the amounts due to them settled against the advances made, whereas those who have received no advances naturally receive the total amount due to them. When the whole of the sugar has been sold and the total sums due received by the Syndicate a final settlement is made by the Syndicate with its members and next year's crop is proceeded with.

Working expenses.

364. The working expenses of the Syndicate are comparatively low, for they do not exceed some Rs. 70,000 per annum, which is but a trifling fraction of the total annual turnover, and we are satisfied that the Syndicate works in the best interests of the industry as a whole. On the other hand, there are no small planters on the Committee, and we think that the principle of mutual co-operation in the industry would be advanced if certain responsible small planters become members of the Committee. We also think that the transactions of the Syndicate for the year, audited and certified by a qualified accountant and auditor, should be published annually.

(To be continued).

A COMMENTARY ON FACTS

by ALFRED D. BRITTER

APPENDIX

In the following pages we have endeavoured to outline a few economic considerations, which affect the general question of employment and labour in this Colony.

Although we realise that opinions may differ on certain particular aspects we have raised, we feel convinced it will not seriously be gainsaid that, on the whole, the economic life of the community is in a very parlous condition, and that, unless, and until, a fundamental and permanent improvement of our basic resources materialises, no real and lasting betterment in the circumstances of life for the masses can be expected.

The issues we deal with in this appendix reveal the extremely precarious and unstable state of the Colony's productive resources, and their evident insufficiency to meet the requirements of a population of 400,000 souls; the condition is aggravated by the paralysing economic loss resulting from the wear and tear of the last 15 years, and by the absence of any prospect of tangible improvement in the future.

DEPRECIATION OF WAGE PAYING CAPACITY OF COLONY

EXPORTS PER HEAD RATIO.

A figure to which we would like to draw attention is the figure representing the value of Exports per Head of Population.

No figure can give a clearer and more concise idea of the limitations of this Colony's wage paying capacity than the Exports per Head figure.

This figure in Mauritius depends to a large extent on the price of Sugar and the output, as Sugar represents as much as 97 o/o of our exports. With a crop of 300,000 tons and a price of Rs. 6.25, the value of our Total Exports of all Domestic produce should be in the neighbourhood of Rs. 38,000,000. With a population of approximately 400,000, our figure for exports per Head would work out to about Rs. 95. per annum, or Rs. 8. per month.

The average of the last 5 years would be a considerably lower figure, something like Rs. 6. per Head per month.

This is an extremely important figure. *It is an excellent ratio* for assessing the *wage paying capacity* of a Colony placed as this Colony is.

Unlike many other Colonies, and unlike the majority of larger territories, Mauritius is more or less entirely dependent on visible exports, so that the ratio which the wage paying capacity of the island bears to its Exports per head figure is a very close one.

The relation between the 2 factors is of course closer in proportion to a country's dependence on visible exports.

Practically all the money entering Mauritius is derived from visible Exports. In fact we incur a substantial loss on invisible *imports*, thus further weakening the economic value of our visible exports.

There is of course a certain amount of domestic trade within the island, but practically all the occupational pursuits of the population are involved in producing for Export.

- (1) The whole population occupied in the Sugar Industry is working for an export market, as only about 3 or 4 per cent. of the production is consumed locally.
- (2) Practically the whole Fibre Industry depends on Export.
- (3) The products of the Copra Industry are nearly all export produce.

It is obvious therefore that practically the whole employed population, including not only Agricultural and Industrial workers, but those in Trade, Industrial transport, Shipping, etc., are paid from the proceeds of Export.

The figure of Exports per Head of population is thus a very reliable guide. It is a ratio which gives us an indication of the wage paying capa-

city of the island ; it is a pointer which brings into clear focus the extremely restricted economic wealth of this Colony at present.

The figure of Rs. 8. per head of population or Rs. 6., which is the approximate average of the last 5 years is not, of course, the average wage which can be paid per head, as the number of wage earning people is only a certain percentage of the total population.

Furthermore a certain proportion of the population is occupied in purely domestic pursuits, and either receive their entire wages, or supplement their revenue from the growing of local food crops, vegetables, fruit, etc., or from the rearing of goats, pigs, poultry, etc., or from the proceeds of fishing. There is also the "circulation of money" factor, as it is known, although not exactly determined, that the greater the circulation, the greater is the yield capacity of money.

There is no means of assessing the value of these purely domestic industries, but it is an admittedly small occupational field as compared to the one afforded by industries producing for export.

That the figure of exports per Head is an orthodox economic index in certain Colonies is generally recognised.

In the Report of the West Indian Sugar Commission in 1930. Lord Olivier shows the importance of this figure, and draws a comparison between the various Colonies. He points out that "in some the Export trade is of less importance in the economy of the island than in others". He points out for instance, that in Trinidad, the exports amounted to £ 17 per head, and in Barbados to £ 7 per head. These were the figures for 1928.

In regards to Trinidad Lord Olivier reported the existence of relative prosperity owing to the high total of exports as compared to the population.

We have secured the latest available figures for Trinidad — 1935. The population is about the same as in Mauritius — nearly 400,000, and the exports in 1935 amounted to £ 4,500,000. This would give us a figure of exports per head of over £ 11 per annum or approximately Rs. 150. or Rs. 13. per month. In 1935 the same figure for Mauritius was less than Rs. 6. ; this indicates that on the same ratio Trinidad has at least double the wage paying capacity of Mauritius.

Moreover Trinidad certainly has a considerably higher figure of invisible exports than Mauritius (it could hardly have less) and therefore depends to a lesser extent on the visible exports per head figure, high as it is compared to ours.

In regard to Barbados the figure of export per head is relatively low ; £ 7 per head in 1928 is somewhat more than the figure for Mauritius at present.

The price of Sugar (Barbados' principal export produce) having dropped considerably since 1928, it would seem that Barbados' wage paying capacity must be about the same as ours.

This is not the case however. Owing to the early introduction of new cane varieties, the production of sugar in that island has gone up by leaps and bounds within the last few years. Although in 1928 Lord Oliver gives the average production of the last 3 years as 53,000 tons of sugar, in 1936 the production had reached over 90,000 tons, and in the British Empire Sugar Quota Barbados has obtained the extraordinarily high

figure of 114,000 tons of exports (which includes the raw sugar value of fancy molasses).

This places Barbados in a relatively secure position, and of course indicates an increased figure of exports per head. Moreover Barbados derives relatively enormous revenue from invisible exports. Lord Olivier makes a special paragraph of this (Vide page 67 of the West Indian Commission Report 1930). Investments abroad, remittances from Barbadians resident in the United States, Canada and employed on the Panama Canal Zone, to their families on the island, Tourist Traffic, etc., all these invisible revenues reduce the dependence of Barbados on visible exports.

The conclusion we derive from these figures is that in comparison with the West Indian Islands, Mauritius is saddled with an export per head figure which is extremely low; and that we are more dependent on export, than any of the West Indian Colonies. The ratio which the export per head figure bears to the wage paying capacity of this Colony is closer and is a clear indication of the extreme economic poverty of the island under present conditions.

The following figures show the *Export per Head per Month* over the following years :

1920	...	...	Rs. 27.	1929	...	...	Rs. 10.
1921	...	...	33.	1930	...	...	5.
1922	...	...	20.	1931	...	...	5.
1923	...	...	14.	1932	...	...	6.
1924	...	...	10.	1933	...	...	7.
1925	...	...	9.	1934	...	...	5.
1926	...	...	8.	1935	...	...	6.
1927	...	...	11.	1936	...	...	7.
1928	...	...	9.				

The above figures reveal, in striking manner, the staggering decrease in the economic strength of Mauritius over the last decade; the wage paying capacity, depending as it does on a ratio closely connected with the above figures, has been reduced to a very low level. Whereas in 1920, 1921, 1922 the export per head ranged between Rs. 20 and Rs. 33 per month, the figure has dropped to between Rs. 5. and Rs. 7. in the last seven years.

If allowance is made for non-wage earners, such as children frequenting school, for instance, and provision added for circulation of money by internal trade, a fair approximation would be reached of our wage paying capacity at present.

The usual argument of course arises as to the question of fair distribution. To attempt any solution of this problem is to cover ground which rightly belongs to universal social politics.

The point as to whether a certain section of the community takes too large a share in the general distribution is a point which could be raised

in almost any community, in any part of the world. It is the "hardy perennial" of every popular orator from Hyde Park Corner to Patagonia.

This aspect of the question is entirely outside the scope of our sketch, as it opens up a field of argument connected with a world problem responsible for an enormous amount of strife and misunderstanding everywhere and which is hardly likely to be settled satisfactorily in Mauritius. This Colony cannot help being part of the Capitalist System which is in force in the British Empire, and in most parts of the world, with the possible exception of Soviet Russia.

APPRECIATION IN VALUE OF WAGES

DEPENDENCE OF POPULATION OF MAURITIUS ON IMPORTED FOOD SUPPLIES

We have shown, in the appendix on the value of exports per head of population that this figure supplies a valuable ratio of the Colony's capacity, as a whole, to pay labour wages. We have established that Mauritius is more dependent on exports than any of the West Indian Islands, and we have reproduced figures which indicate, in striking manner, the extremely serious decrease in the economic strength of the Colony.

There is another form of illustration we wish to submit, which completes the perspective we have set out to trace. We have shown that, as the wage paying capacity of the Colony, on the whole, has decreased in the same proportion as the value of exports per head, that the Colony is not, economically speaking, in a position to afford the same level of wages as in the past. ...

We now propose to demonstrate that the level of wages ruling in the Colony has enabled the wage earner to purchase his main requirements of life at a considerably lower cost to him than was the case when he was earning more; in other words, that the value of the average wage received by the wage earner is, in actual fact, greater, and that this greater purchasing value amply compensates, and even exceeds, the apparent loss he may have incurred in amount.

Before we enter into this consideration, it is important that we should emphasize the fact that Mauritius depends unduly upon imported foodstuffs, the purchasing power for which is largely furnished by wages, and, inversely, that the purchasing power of wages is low or high in proportion to the cost of those foodstuffs.

We believe we are putting the computation on a low estimate if we submit that the agricultural population of the Colony depends for 80 per cent. of its food upon imported foodstuffs, and that the same is approximately true for the rest of the working classes.

When we consider that Rice, Dholl, Lentils, Flour, Oils, etc., form the bulk of the nourishment of labourers, and that the whole amount of these is imported; that such other supplementary articles as Sardines, Saltfish, Butter, Margarine, Ghee, Salt, Spices, Tea, etc., are also mainly imported, it is clear that the dependence of the labouring population on imported foodstuffs is more or less absolute.

This being the case, it is self-evident that the value of a wage in Mauritius must be assessed, *not by the actual size of the wage but by its buying power in relation to imported foodstuffs.*

To illustrate this point we would say that a good instance of this relative dependence on imported foodstuffs is provided by a comparison between various Colonies. In the West Indies, where prevailing conditions are very much the same as they are here, there are marked differences between the dependence of the various islands on imported food supplies.

This important distinction was remarked upon by the Royal Commission of 1896, of which Sir Henry Norman was Chairman, and in the valuable Memorandum on the condition of the West Indies by Sir Daniel Morris; it also formed an interesting feature of the West Indian Commission Report of 1930.

Imports of Food and Drink into Jamaica, for instance, amounted to only £ 2. 1. per head in 1928, and yet in Trinidad and Barbados, the ratio was £ 5. 4. and £ 5. 0. respectively.

The reason is that Jamaica is more effectively self-supporting than either Trinidad or Barbados, as its labouring population is mainly composed of West Indian negroes who grow their own foodstuffs on small holdings. The situation in Trinidad and Barbados is that they are considerably more dependent on imported food; in Trinidad the labouring population is largely composed of East Indians, mainly the descendants of imported indentured labourers from India, who like their fellow East Indians in Mauritius are mainly Rice and Dhol consumers, and therefore dependent on imported food supplies.

The general imports into Mauritius are now classified into 4 distinct groups, in compliance with the current Board of Trade rule in force throughout the Empire.

These 4 groups of merchandise are :

Class I — Food and Drink.

Class II — Raw materials and articles mainly unmanufactured.

Class III — Materials mainly or wholly manufactured.

Class IV — Animals not for food.

In order to estimate the dependence of a territory on imported foodstuffs, a computation based on Class I (Food and Drink) imports gives a true view of the position.

If we consider imports of Food and Drink statistics in Mauritius, we cannot fail to be impressed by two salient features.

(1) That the *quantities* imported have remained very much the same for the last 15 years.

(2) That the *values* have decreased enormously over the same period.

In a comparative statement we think it would be fairer to leave out the period following the bumper years of 1920 and 1921 when the values of all commodities were abnormally inflated. For the purposes of our illustration it will be sufficient if we take the last 10 years or so. This would also correspond with the period during which wages are assumed to have decreased, and during which labourers are *alleged* to have suffered undue prejudice.

The following statement shows the total value in Rupees of all imports of Food and Drink into the Colony between 1926 and 1935, and the computed quantity in tons of the same imports.

CLASS I.— FOOD AND DRINK IMPORTS.

				VALUE IN RUPEES			TOTAL QUANTI- TIES IN TONS
1926	...	...	...	Rs. 23,656,234	...	...	Tons. 80,122
1927	...	...	...	25,515,641	...	...	91,919
1928	...	...	...	24,061,843	...	...	93,389
1929	...	...	...	21,234,817	...	...	81,810
1930	...	...	...	16,915,748	...	...	74,557
1931	...	...	...	14,314,690	...	...	89,525
1932	...	...	...	12,268,986	...	...	78,922
1933	...	...	...	10,344,889	...	...	73,354
1934	...	...	...	12,010,600	...	...	89,017
1935	...	...	...	12,900,047	...	...	86,242

The above statement reveals that, while the amount of Food and Drink imports has remained approximately the same, *the value over the same period, has decreased by half*; in other words, that, while the consumer has indulged to about the same extent in the satisfaction of his needs those needs have *cost him about half as much*.

It is also of interest to point out that the principal items which constitute Class I (Food and Drink) imports, are Rice, Flour, Dholi, Lentils, Edible Oils, Saltfish, Salt, Ghee, Spices, Sardines, etc., i.e. commodities which form the bulk of the nourishment of the labouring classes, and also include Gram, Bran, Peas, Oats, etc., which are utilized for feeding draught animals, belonging mainly to the same class of the population.

As the wage earner in Mauritius depends to such a great extent on imported foodstuffs, the purchasing capacity, and consequently, *the real effective value of his wage*, is increased in proportion to the value of his requirements. It is evident that when those *same requirements have* decreased in value by half, as has been the case in the last 10 years, the buying power of his wage has increased by as much.

It may be said, however, that the wage average has decreased during the same period. We are prepared to agree, but in view of the situation, revealed above the wage average would have to indicate a 50 per cent. decrease before the wage earner could complain of prejudice. If, on the other hand, the decrease in wages has averaged, say, for the purpose of our argument, 20 per cent. the wage earner, on the whole, so far as food, at least, is concerned, is considerably better off than he was 10 years ago.

Again, it may be argued that, although the labourer is so largely dependent on imported foodstuffs, these do not represent all his vital requirements. Again, we agree; if we have used foodstuffs to illustrate our point it is mainly because they represent such a considerable percentage of the requirements of the labourer, and as an effective and cast-iron answer to the parrot-cry that his present wages are causing under-nourishment, vital prejudice, etc.

There is also the fact that there are no reliable statistics to guide us

in any endeavour to ascertain what the labourer spent on his other requirements in the past and what he spends now on similar needs.

But, apart from imported foodstuffs, the day labourer's other requirements are: Rent, Clothing, Local vegetables, Tobacco, etc. It is well-known that the cost of these items has decreased appreciably in the last 10 years.

The inevitable conclusion is that *the wage of the labourer has increased considerably in purchasing power*. As the only purpose of the wage, its sole "*raison d'être*", is its purchasing power, the benefit to the wage earner of such conditions as we have outlined, is very tangible and real.

This question of the increased buying power of the wage has an extremely important bearing on the whole issue relating to wages; it is a fundamental point, which cannot be over-looked.

NO DECREASE IN IMPORTS OF ESSENTIAL FOODSTUFFS*

(STATEMENT PREPARED IN MAY 1936)

In view of the statements, currently made in recent years, and more frequently at present, in support of the opinion that the population of the Colony is being under-nourished, owing to the low scale of wages prevailing, it may be of interest to examine whether any light can be thrown on this question by reference to statistics of imports of essential foodstuffs, as revealed in the trade returns.

While there is a certain amount of truth in the dictum that figures may be made to prove anything, there is no doubt that in the case of a Colony such as Mauritius, depending more or less entirely on imports for its requirements in grain and other essential foodstuffs, any considerable decline in the consumption of those commodities would be bound, sooner or later, if such decline is maintained over a sufficiently long period, to show itself in the import statistics.

The essential foodstuffs generally accepted as forming the basis of the nourishment of the labouring classes, and in fact, of the working classes in general, representing over 9/10ths. of the population, are Rice, Dholl, Lentils, Saltfish and, to a certain extent, Flour and Edible Oils.

It seems to us that any sustained under-nourishment on an appreciable scale, would inevitably involve under consumption of the above commodities, especially of Rice, which is the staple foodstuff, and although we are not inclined to draw conclusions, we outline the figures for what they may be worth.

In order to give figures which indicate as clearly as possible, the consumption of those foodstuffs in the Colony, we are putting down the imports actually retained for local consumption, after deducting the quantities re-exported over the same period.

Our statistics cover the years 1926, to 1935, i.e. the last 10 years, and the period is sufficiently long to enable us to examine whether the import returns reveal indications of that under-consumption which under-nourishment on a widespread scale would tend to bring about.

* Vide Page 4 of text. Paragraph 3.

RETAINED IMPORTS OF THE PRINCIPAL ESSENTIAL FOODSTUFFS

		RISE	DHOLL	LENTILS	FLOUR	EDIBLE OILS	SALT- FISH
		Tons	Tons	Tons	Tons	Tons	Tons
1926	...	52,904	4,249	1,016	5,458	1,873	1,227
1927	...	58,337	4,146	1,244	8,732	1,702	1,482
1928	...	63,771	3,262	926	9,558	1,195	1,281
1929	...	55,050	3,586	1,009	8,859	1,670	1,054
1930	...	51,895	3,172	800	8,595	2,036	1,043
1931	...	62,498	3,310	1,144	10,329	1,962	862
1932	...	57,073	3,474	1,174	8,202	2,099	1,013
1933	...	50,861	3,400	1,075	9,418	2,372	885
1934	...	59,861	3,990	1,086	14,693	2,335	850
1935	...	60,568	4,601	1,614	9,510	2,974	1,108
Average for above							
10 years :		57,265	3,721	1,158	9,338	1,976	1,074

The above statistics show that not only has there been no decline in the consumption of any of the above essential foodstuffs, but that, on the contrary, in each case the imports of last year are considerably higher than the average for the last 10 years.

Whatever interpretation may be given to the above figures, one thing is abundantly clear, and that is, that there is not the slightest evidence of any weakening in the normal distribution of those foodstuffs in the Colony.

It may be of interest to point out that our retained imports of Rice and Flour never exceed on an average, 57,000 tons and 9,000 tons respectively : as a matter of fact the quinquennial period immediately preceding the 10 years outlined above, i.e. 1921 to 1925, shows an average of 55,600 tons and 8,600 tons respectively.

It is evident therefore that retained imports of Rice and Flour distributed locally for consumption during the last 2 years are appreciably above normal.

Neither would it be correct to assume that the retained imports of 1934 and 1935 were in excess of local market requirements, as although definite figures for the first 6 months of 1936 are not yet available, it is no secret that imports of grain this year have been enormous and have been actually strained accommodation at the granary, which would hardly have been the case had the 1935 imports created abnormal unsold stocks.

The above statement was compiled in May last year. It will be observed that imports of foodstuffs vary considerably from year to year, and that too large a quantity imported in any one year is generally followed by reduced imports the next year. This is specially noticeable in the case of Rice; for instance, the short fall in imports in 1926, is made up the next year, and the following year; again, the short fall in 1933 is made up in 1934 and 1935.

The Blue Book for 1936 has not yet been issued, and complete detailed statistics of imports are not yet published for last year, so that it is impossible to supply accurate official figures of *retained* imports. Nevertheless the figures available show that there has been a short fall of about 3,000 tons in imports of Rice as compared with the average.

This short fall has no significance; inasmuch as in 1935 imports of rice were 3,000 tons *over* the average, it is quite logical to expect a short fall of the same amount in 1936.

On the whole, it is now abundantly clear, in the face of all the evidence available, that there is not the slightest indication of any weakening in the distribution of essential foodstuffs on this market.

These figures of retained imports are by far the best index of consumption; in fact *there is no other index* under the conditions existing in the Colony.

One argument brought against the inevitable conclusion of these figures is that, although the *total* consumption of foodstuffs shows no weakening, the "per capita" consumption is lower owing to the increase of population.

This is a fallacy! The population of the Colony, including the Dependencies, may have increased slightly between the two census years 1921-1931, but *it has not increased during the last 10 years*; on the contrary the official figures show that it has decreased during the last 10 years under review, i.e. between 1926 and 1935, or between 1927 and 1936.

We have chosen that period because it exactly covers the period of our import statistics, and because it covers the period during which wages of labourers are alleged to have dropped. A temporary drop in wages is known to have taken place in 1931 and 1932. Our period of 10 years 1926-1935 covers those years, leaving a quinquennial period on each side: 1926-1930 and 1931-35.

The following statistics of Population are as shown in the Official Returns of the Registrar General, obtained from the Civil Statute Office in Port Louis:

YEAR	MAURITIUS	DEPENDENCIES	TOTAL
1926 ...	398,236	9,226	407,462
1927 ...	401,693	9,389	411,082
1928 ...	404,802	9,662	414,464
1929 ...	405,549	9,985	415,534
1930 ...	404,458	10,336	414,794
Census year			
1931 ...	391,044	9,860	400,904
1932 ...	388,400	9,937	398,337
1933 ...	390,697	10,310	401,007
1934 ...	393,733	10,457	404,190
1935 ...	396,267	10,753	407,020

We have included the Dependencies, because the import returns cover the Dependencies as well; however, whether we take the Colony alone, or whether we include the Dependencies, the population shows a *decrease* during the period under review.

The inevitable conclusion, therefore, is that there is no indication of the slightest reduction in either the total, or the "per capita" consumption of essential foodstuffs during the last 10 years. The contrary appears to be the case.

It is not within our province to analyse the reason why the "per capita" consumption has not decreased in spite of the lower income received by the bulk of the consumers of those foodstuffs; several reasons suggest themselves to our mind, but we can imagine no better indication than what is to be found in the price of those foodstuffs.

Wholesale and retail prices of essential foodstuffs have dropped enormously within the last 10 years, and this has enabled the consumer to provide himself, without any diminution in his rate of consumption.

The ratio of decrease in prices of essential foodstuffs has been greater than the ratio of decrease of income.

In the case of the majority of essential foodstuffs, especially in the case of Rice, the price in the last 10 years has registered a decrease of as much as 50 per cent; another significant indication is to be found in the Customs Returns of the CIF value of foodstuffs.

In 1927 our retained imports of Rice of 58,000 tons cost over Rs. 13,000,000, whereas in 1935 our retained imports of 60,000 tons cost only Rs. 6,500,000; i.e. although in 1935 we imported 2,000 tons more Rice than in 1927, it cost us *half* the value of 1927.

(The above Statement was compiled in August 1937)

N. B. — It is now (end November) possible to estimate the quantity of Rice imported this year (1937).

We would assess the total quantity imported for the whole year (January to December) at about 65,000 tons i.e. again the high-water mark for Rice imports, and possibly a record.

This effectively disposes of the fictitious idea of under-consumption, as it establishes, beyond any manner of doubt whatever, that requirements are as strong, and probably stronger than ever.

PAYMENT FOR CANES IN THE WEST INDIES*

(REPORT OF THE WEST INDIAN SUGAR COMMISSION 1931)

Page 107. — Para. 363. TRINIDAD.

"Each factory has a number of weighing-scales situated at loading stations on their own or the Government railway lines, and farmers' canes are purchased by weight at the scale, the price paid being 5 per cent. of the price of 1 ton of sugar FOB for each ton of canes. Throughout Trinidad there are certain agreed reductions to cover the cost of transport of canes, the packing and selling of sugar, etc. There is also a mutually agreed minimum price of 12s. per ton† which has been observed by the factories, but which will have to be reduced in case of serious decrease in the price of sugar due to the loss of Imperial Preference. To the amount paid for farmer's canes there must be added expenses of from 60 cents to 90 cents per ton of cane incurred by the factory in granting credit faci-

* (Vide Page 42 of text).

† The minimum price of 12s. referred to in Para. 363 applies to 1929, when the price of sugar was about 50 per cent. more than it is now.

lities, superintending cultivation to secure advances made, weighing and loading canes, and a proportion of the office accounting expenses. The basis for the price paid is the average sale-price of West Indian sugars in Canada and the United Kingdom, as advised by Messrs : Czarnikow and Company in London. ”

Para. 108. — Para. 364

“ Some complaints were made regarding the limitation of areas by the factories preventing competition for the purchase of farmers’ canes, but when the problems of crop advances to farmers and the harvesting of canes from about 18,000 individuals are considered, it is evident that this measure has resulted in reduced costs, both to the factory and to the farmer. ”

Para. 366.

“ Dissatisfaction in some few cases with the basis price for computation of the purchase price is chiefly due to lack of understanding of the method of fixing this price. ”

Page 117. — Para. 404. JAMAICA.

“ Owing to the banana having proved to be a very paying crop in Jamaica, there is, at present, very little cane-planting by small growers, and owing to the low prices which can be paid for canes the amount of cane grown in districts which are suited for cane-growing only has been steadily falling. The usual basis for payment is, as in other islands, 5 per cent. of the selling price of sugar. In one case, in which sugar was being produced for the local market, we were told that 6 per cent. and 6 1/4 per cent. were paid. ”

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE RETURNS

Price per bag of Rangoon, Chatta Ballam and Bangtoolsie rice
for the years 1924-25*

Months	1924			1925		
	Rangoon	Chatta Ballam	Bangtoolsie	Rangoon	Chatta Ballam	Bangtoolsie
	Rs. Cs.	Rs. Cs.	Rs. C.	Rs. Cs.	Rs. Cs.	Rs. Cs.
January	15.50	21.50	None	20.50	21.00	24.00
February	15.50	21.00	”	20.50	21.00	22.50
March	16.00	19.00	”	16.25	21.00	21.00
April	16.50	19.00	”	16.25	21.00	21.00
May	16.50	19.00	”	16.25	21.00	22.00
June	16.50	19.00	”	15.75	21.00	21.50
July	18.00	20.00	”	16.00	21.00	22.50
August	20.00	20.00	”	16.50	21.00	22.50
September	20.00	21.00	”	17.00	22.00	23.00
October	20.00	21.00	”	17.25	22.00	22.50
November	20.50	21.00	”	17.25	22.00	22.50
December	20.50	21.00	”	17.25	22.00	22.50

* (Vide Page 68 of text).

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE RETURNS—(Continued)
Price per bag of Rangoon, Chatta Ballam and Bangtoolsie rice
for the years 1935-1936*

Months	1935		1936		1936	
	Rangoon	Chatta Ballam	Bangtoolsie	Rangoon	Chatta Ballam	Bangtoolsie
	Rs. Cs.	Rs. Cs.	Rs. Cs.	Rs. Cs.	Rs. C.	Rs. Cs.
January	8 75	None	12.00	9 00	None	12.50
February	8.08	"	12.00	9.50	"	12.25
March	8.25	"	12.00	9.00	"	12.50
April	8.25	"	11.75	8.25	"	12.75
May	8.75	"	11.75	8.50	"	12.75
June	8 60	"	11.75	9.00	"	12.50
July	8.75	"	12.00	8.90	"	12.25
August	8.75	"	12.00	8.75	"	12.50
September	9.00	"	12.25	8.60	"	12.75
October	9.00	"	12.50	8.70	"	12.50
November	9.50	"	12.50	9 15	"	12.75
December	9.50	"	12.00	9.35	"	12.75

PRESENT DAY CONDITIONS IN INDIA

(VIDE PAGE 56 OF TEXT)

On page 56 of the text we submitted that if the Indian labourer had stayed on in India he would be existing under more or less the same conditions as those prevailing 100 years ago.

It is evidently not possible for us to give even an outline of the information available on present day conditions for the masses in India, out it would be futile to ignore the fact that millions of people all over India, and indeed, all over the East, eke out an existence which is pitiable in the extreme.

The literature on the subject is monumental, and the fact cannot be questioned that millions are born in misery, and toil through life in abject poverty and wretchedness.

We reproduce the following brief extract from a leading article in the "Times" of August 5th. 1937, on "The Indian Villager and his interests" which refers to his present condition: "here is *one-fifth of the world's population* in an acute stage of political transition, 90 per cent. bereft for the most part of anything worth the name of education, in a country where distance, ignorance and poor communications combine to retard progress and increase the forces of disruption..."

"The task of communicating methods of scientific production in agriculture to the illiterate inhabitants of 500,000 isolated villages is stupendous."

In the cities of India the conditions are, if anything, worse. In his

* (Vide Page 66 of text).

well-informed book published in 1934, Mr. H. C. Dent, B.A., allows us to visualise the situation : " In Bombay, for example, over 300,000 people live more than 5 in a room, while over 15,000 are huddled 20 or more in a room. "

There is no need to say that famines are still of frequent occurrence in India ; the monsoons are eagerly awaited each year for " upon the rains depend, not only the success of the crops, but only too often life and death, as if the wet season is less wet than usual, or is delayed overmuch, the crops fail and the people starve. " (H. C. Dent, 1934).

CAPITAL AND LABOUR

A careful study of economic conditions prevailing in Mauritius for the last 10 years would show that the disastrous years we have been through have been particularly prejudicial to the interests of Capital in this Colony, and that, relatively speaking, such prejudice as may have been suffered by labour, is insignificant.

Whatever index is used to gauge the effect of the crisis on Capital reveals that the gradual extinction of wealth has been a constant process during the last 10 or 12 years.

The excess of imports over exports over a long period of years indicates that the balance of oversea payments over the last 10 years has drained considerable capital from the Colony.

We are not referring to the debts of the Sugar Industry, although it is known that the figure of debt represents an extremely heavy burden on the finances of the Industry, a burden which has had to be incurred to enable the Industry to carry on and tide over critical periods in the past.

On the whole, the consequences of the long depression in the Sugar Industry have been disastrous financially to the interests involved, and have seriously weakened the economic fabric of the Colony.

In the absence of any economic revenue accruing to the Colony in the shape of invisible exports, and in view of the fact that our invisible imports amount to an average of approximately Rs. 4,000,000 per annum, it is evident that unless our visible exports exceed visible imports by at least that amount, there is bound to be a gradual exhaustion of wealth in the Colony.

A glance at the Trade Returns would show that within the last 10 or 15 years adverse trade balances have been more frequent than favourable balances. It is therefore obvious that there has been a gradual depletion of wealth within the Colony.

The origin of the trouble goes back to the boom years 1919, 1920 and 1921, when the sudden increase in the value of exports was immediately followed by an increase in the value of imports.

The enormous drop in the price of Sugar which brought down the value of our exports from 127 million Rupees in 1920, to 80 millions in 1923, to 45 millions in 1926, to 22 millions in 1931 and to 32 millions in 1936 was followed by a reduction of imports, but as the value of imports depended on oversea prices and on the enhanced requirements of the local market, it was inevitable that it should take longer to readjust our imports than it had taken for our exports to fall, and a period of several years had to elapse before a balance could be established.

During the period 1923 to 1936 the loss incurred on the visible balance of trade alone amounted to approximately 90 million Rupees, as may be gauged from the following table of Trade Values :

FIGURES ARE IN MILLIONS OF RUPEES

EXPORTS AND RE-EXPORTS					IMPORTS
1923	...	...	68	...	80
1924	...	...	51	...	80
1925	...	...	43	...	61
1926	...	...	40	...	50
1927	...	...	56	...	56
1928	...	...	46	...	52
1929	...	...	51	...	46
1930	...	...	26	...	40
1931	...	...	23	...	32
1932	...	...	28	...	27
1933	...	...	32	...	29
1934	...	...	26	...	32
1935	...	...	29	...	30
1936	...	...	32	...	29
<hr/> 551 <hr/>					<hr/> 644 <hr/>

The real economic loss, if the deficit on the balance of invisible trade is included, would probably amount to about 150 million Rupees.

The result was a disastrous capital loss to the Colony, the extent of which is not generally realized.

It is evident that the effect of this loss has considerably impaired the available capital in the Colony as it not only completely depleted the reserves of wealth which had accumulated as a result of the boom years immediately following the war, but made dangerous inroads on the economic fabric.

The process outlined above is confirmed by the present financial state of the Sugar Industry which is known to have been seriously prejudiced in its operation by stringency of money, a condition which has paralysed all industrial enterprise in the island. The continued losses incurred by the Industry have drained the resources of the majority of Estates, and the load of debt they have had to incur to keep up production is so enormous that the present situation of industrial interests in the Colony, with an uncertain future before them, is the very reverse of healthy: it is an extremely precarious situation.

For an isolated and circumscribed community, neither self-supporting nor self-determining, where labour must, in the inevitable law of

things, be dependent on Capital, the interests of labour are far, very far, from having been unduly penalised under the prevailing economic conditions described above.

As compared to the enormous prejudice suffered by Capital, the conditions prevailing for labour have, throughout those disastrous years, remained in a privileged position, relatively speaking.

The suggestion that Capital and industrial interests have been carried on at the expense of labour during this period of depression, is an ignorant and irresponsible suggestion, radically opposed to the truth.

We believe that if a careful computation of the relevant figures is worked out on recognized principles of industrial finance, it would be found that, in point of actual fact, it is the labouring population which, on the whole, has been maintained in normal economic condition at the expense of an industry struggling precariously to keep up production on disastrous market prices.

It is idle sophistry to ignore facts and figures and to ventilate social theories and aspirations which the inexorable law of circumstances makes it impossible to indulge.

The Colony of Mauritius is indeed extremely fortunate that its staple industry has found it possible, notwithstanding its own insuperable difficulties, to keep up the normal economic life of the agricultural population dependent upon it; this population has been spared the appalling conditions which might very well have overtaken it had the machinery of production collapsed as has occurred in other parts of the world during the unprecedented crisis which has overwhelmed many producing countries for the last 6 or 7 years.

There is surely no need to quote instances of terrible distress of agricultural populations as a result of economic collapse or of inevitable catastrophe.

In the very last number of the "Times" received in Mauritius dated October 21st, 1937, the situation in the Colony of Cyprus is described, and we dedicate the following brief extracts to those who wish us to believe that our agricultural population is in great distress:

"The Colony (of Cyprus) is poor. Its chief industry is Agriculture; but crops require water"... "The uncertainty of the peasants' prospects was painfully exposed in 1933, when two exceptionally rainless winters had made the springs run dry and brought the rural population to the verge of starvation"... "It did no credit to fifty years of British rule that in 1933 the Cypriot peasants *were eating weeds* and owed something like £ 2,000,000 to the money-lenders."

Apparently, in the British Colony of Cyprus, agriculture suffers from lack of water. In Mauritius we suffer from lack of prices; it is merely a question of degree.

The Sugar Industry has managed to circumvent collapse, and we have shown at what cost to local capital this has been achieved.

THE PLANTER-LABOURER AND THE LABOURER-PLANTER IN MAURITIUS

MAIN PREJUDICE CAUSED BY LOW PRICE OF SUGAR

It has been suggested that the agitation carried on in the Colony for

the last 18 months, would not have been successful had there not been grievances to be redressed.

We submit that this is merely a plausible suggestion, i.e. a sweeping assertion that sounds well, but has nothing more sound to substantiate it than its attraction as an abstract truth.

In point of fact such suggestions have no value at all, apart from their usefulness in newspaper comment and in academic debate.

We have already dealt with the tendency to confuse the issues between a grievance and an aspiration ; there is surely no need to emphasize this point again.

There is, however, one aspect of the situation in the present unrest we would like to outline, and this refers to a distinction between a grievance which can be redressed, and a grievance which prevails through force of circumstances. Again, between these two forms of grievance there is confusion, and misunderstanding.

As is known, one feature of the present unrest is a complaint by the labourer that his wages are inadequate.

Another feature is a complaint by the small planter that the remuneration he receives for his cane is inadequate.

We submit that these two questions are closely connected, and that in view of the conditions prevailing in Mauritius, the two issues are inseparable.

It is an established fact that an extremely large number of small planters are also labourers, in the sense that they not only cultivate their land and sell its produce to the most convenient buyer, but also hire themselves out as labourers on the nearest estate.

It is also an established fact (and it follows from the fore-going) that an extremely large proportion of the free day labourers are also owners of small plots of land, and that they not only employ themselves as labourers, but also cultivate their land and sell its produce.

It is evident therefore that when the price of Sugar drops to the unconscionably low level on which it has been for the last 6 years, the following classes of the Indian population are bound to feel the inevitable prejudice that results :

- (a) The planter, big and small, who depends entirely on the price of sugar ;
- (b) The small planter, who is a labourer as well ;
- (c) The labourer, who is a small planter as well.

An estimate, carefully carried out, would show that these 3 classes cover the *majority* of the male adults of the Indian population.

In his evidence before the Commission Mr. M. Burrenchobay, Asst. Registrar of Cooperative Credit Societies, declared that : " small planters do not rely on the product of their land for their existence. The owner of one acre, for instance, is also a labourer who works on neighbouring estates. "

The fact mentioned by Mr. Burrenchobay is known ; it also follows that all labourers who own, or whose fathers or mothers own, some land, are not dependent on their wages for their existence.

It follows equally that all labourers who own, or whose fathers or mothers own, carts, milch cows, vegetable plots, etc., are not entirely dependent on their wages for their existence.

We have no accurate figure available to show the exact number of agricultural workers who are also small owners of cane land, vegetable land, milch cows, rentable huts and who indulge in other forms of activity such as manure, poultry, goats, etc.

We are given to understand, that 75 per cent of the male adult labourers in the Colony are not dependent on wages alone for their existence, and estimates made by us on certain data available, seem to confirm this fact.

Whatever percentage we adopt, it is evident that an extremely large proportion of the *labourers* are directly affected by the low prices ruling for their cane (owing to the low price of sugar), and, that *even if their wages have not decreased*, their total average revenue is less.

The conditions, therefore, are propitious for the manufacture of grievances. As they are unable to influence the price of sugar, they complain of their wage being inadequate.

The real truth is that what they feel to be inadequate is their total income, i.e. proceeds of cane, etc., plus wages, or vice-versa, wages plus proceeds of cane, etc.

We are perfectly confident that if the price of sugar had been high, and that the factories had been in a position to buy cane at a relatively high price, there would have been no "grievances" amongst labourers, as the total income of the labourer-planter or planter-labourer would have been higher than it is, and the 3 classes A, B and C mentioned above would not have joined hands as they have done during the recent unrest.

This *does not mean* that the causes of the unrest were either legitimate or founded on grievances that could be redressed.

The real prejudice which the majority of the Indian agricultural population has been incurring for the past 6 years is the low price of sugar, as the majority depend on a total revenue earned as planter-labourer or labourer planter.

This a prejudice for which nobody in this Colony is responsible, as it is brought about by prevailing circumstances, and cannot be redressed by agitation.

Evidently the promoters of the present agitation, finding it unprofitable to attack a brick wall in the shape of sugar prices, have induced both the labourer-planter and the planter-labourer to clamour for the removal of alleged grievances on the score of inadequate wages and inadequate payment for canes, and the plausible, but spurious, allegation has been formulated that these conditions could be remedied by the Sugar Industry.

It is indeed appropriate to conclude, as Sir Frank Swettenham concluded under similar circumstances, that such agitation "*is only calculated, and can only be calculated, to produce unrest and disturbance amongst the labouring population of the Colony.*"

L'Arachide

par PIERRE DE SORNAY.

Cette plante est généralement connue à Maurice sous le nom de pistache.

Le Gouvernement soucieux des intérêts de la colonie veut essayer la culture de cette légumineuse afin d'arrêter en partie tout au moins l'importation des huiles comestibles.

L'idée est de reprendre et d'étendre les cultures secondaires qui incluraient le riz, la pistache etc...

Nous avons démontré dans un article publié au Cernéen que le riz est une culture pauvre et que les conditions climatiques nuisent le plus souvent à la récolte.

En mettant en relief le peu d'intérêt que suscitent ces cultures je n'ai point l'intention de décourager ceux qui voudraient les entreprendre. Mon idée est simplement de leur faire part des expériences déjà faites et de les mettre en garde contre des espoirs qui pourraient se transformer en déceptions.

Pour la pistache, un seul moyen existe de lui donner quelque intérêt. Ce moyen serait de taxer suffisamment les huiles étrangères afin de permettre à nos cultivateurs de tirer quelque profit de l'emploi de leurs capitaux.

La pistache est une légumineuse d'intérêt secondaire parce que ses rendements sont généralement faibles. C'est une plante à culture plutôt extensive.

Elle est cultivée à Maurice depuis le 18^{me} siècle. La variété commune est originaire de Mozambique. C'est un fait non contrôlé, mais tout indique que Bourbon et Maurice durent recevoir d'Afrique ou même de Madagascar leurs semences.

Cossigny en 1802 écrivait. " L'Ile de France et la Réunion cultivent l'arachide dès longtemps ; elles l'ont tirée de Madagascar où cette plante est indigène ".

A Maurice la pistache trouve un climat favorable à sa végétation, à condition toutefois qu'elle soit semée en Novembre — Décembre afin d'être récoltée en Avril — Mai.

Si cette saison est favorable en raison de sa température et de sa pluviosité, par contre elle présente des risques qui sont les cyclones. Les variétés rampantes sont moins exposées à subir les chocs des rafales, mais celles à tiges dressées sont assez fortement secouées. Elles balayent le sol et le beau temps revenu, elles sont atteintes par des moisissures, noircissent et se dessèchent. La récolte est perdue si les gousses n'ont pas atteint leur développement normal.

Les maladies que nous avons pu observer sur la pistache sont assez nombreuses. Il y a d'abord les tâches noires sur les feuilles dues à un *Cercospora* qui se développe en présence d'une forte humidité.

La fanaison prend parfois une grande extension. Les plants se fanent brusquement sans qu'on puisse se rendre compte de la cause réelle,

Les pistaches sont attaquées par d'autres maladies causées par des moisissures et des champignons. Leur résistance est plus ou moins grande suivant les variétés.

Certains insectes sont nuisibles aux plantations.

Quels sont les terrains qui pourraient être réservés à cette culture. En cas de culture intensive, il faudrait, vu son mode de reproduction, qu'elle soit plantée dans une terre meuble et légère. Il ne faut pas oublier en effet que le fruit provient d'un long prolongement de l'ovaire qui s'enfonce dans le sol. C'est dans ces conditions que le fruit se développe et mûrit. Dans les terres tant soit peu dures ou compactes, les résultats ne sont pas les mêmes, de même que dans celles rocailleuses ou pierreuses. En outre, la récolte est plus difficile, la main-d'œuvre étant obligée de fouiller le sol pour trouver les gousses, d'où coût plus élevé de l'arrachage qui est aussi moins productif.

Il a été dit que le Gouvernement désirait obtenir 4000 tonnes de pistaches. Ceci impliquerait une récolte de 7000 tonnes environ en vert car il faut compter de la gousse verte à la gousse sèche une perte moyenne de 40 p. c. — Dans des sols de fertilité variée, les rendements peuvent passer de 1100 à 1800 kilos soit 1400 kilos de moyenne en vert à l'arpent. Il faudrait donc une superficie de 5000 arpents pour obtenir cette production.

En 1909, M. Bonâme écrivait : " Le rendement de la pistache n'est jamais très élevé : il varie beaucoup suivant les localités et les variétés cultivées, et ce n'est pas une culture à grosse production. Dans la plupart des contrées on la plante sur des terres assez pauvres, à culture plutôt extensive. "

M. Fauchère, Inspecteur général d'Agriculture Coloniale, donne les chiffres suivants dans son ouvrage. " Guide pratique d'Agriculture Tropicale ", chiffres provenant de la Station de Palur (Indes Anglaises).

Moyenne de récolte à l'arpent (Kilos)

Variétés	Huile	Pistaches sèches
Afrique occidentale	211	844
Barbades de Ceylan	190	760
Madagascar	175	700
Maurice (variété de Maurice)	146	584
Maurice de Ceylan	146	584
Caroline	135	640
Sénégal	129	616
Grosse Japonaise	113	452
Transvaal	107	428
Virginie	107	428

Nous allons donner une idée des rendements en vert dans les différents pays : (arpent).

Au Sénégal, la moyenne est de 400 kilos. On peut atteindre 1200 à 1800 kilos.

En Algérie un arpent rapporte 1000 à 1600 kilos.

Aux États Unis le minimum est de 800 kilos, mais on a atteint 4000 kilos.

Dans l'Inde, Bombay, le rendement moyen de cinq années a été de 2240 kilos.

A Maurice en culture ordinaire on a obtenu 1000 kilos. Suivant la fertilité du sol, les rendements ont varié dans les essais de la Station Agronomique de 1140 à 1800 kilos.

En entrelignes de cannes, en plantant une ligne sur deux, la récolte a donné de 550 à 700 kilos.

Comme la perte en poids au séchage est en moyenne de 40% on a donc en réalité à Maurice un rendement en sec de 684 à 1080 kilos en culture ordinaire et en entrelignes 330 à 420 kilos une ligne sur deux et 660 à 840 kilos pour toutes les lignes.

Un manager, dont la compétence est bien connue, s'est livré à une enquête aux Trois Ilots, Olivia et les environs sur la culture de la pistache. Voici les renseignements qu'il a bien voulu nous communiquer.

Depuis 1937, la superficie ne dépassait pas huit à dix arpents. Avant cette date cette plante était cultivée sur une plus grande échelle.

Le rendement en terres franches varie entre 400 et 600 kilos de pistaches sèches à l'arpent.

Depuis ces trois dernières années, les cultivateurs ne trouvant pas un prix rémunérateur pour leur produit, ont remplacé la pistache par la canne. Ces arachides servaient à la préparation des pistaches grillées mais étaient concurrencées par celles importées.

En 1922 à Belle Rive (Phoenix) un planteur cultivait la pistache sur des terrains labourés au tracteur. Le kilo de cette huile se vendait à cette époque 90 sous. Pendant que tout était hors de prix, période d'après guerre, on a planté la pistache sur une certaine étendue surtout du côté d'Olivia et de Belle Rive. Une petite usine à extraction permettait à son propriétaire de tirer parti des arachides produites et achetées, en mettant sur le marché une huile clarifiée (Huile de Gassin).—

Une usine de pressage a manipulé en 1927-28, 63.512 kilos de pistaches sèches. Le pourcentage de cosses a varié de 28 à 36 p. c. suivant la variété et l'état des pistaches.

Prix moyen d'achat = Rs. 173.75 (Extrêmes 160 à 200 Rs.)

Extraction moyenne huile = 23.7% (Extrêmes 21.5-25.9)

Prix moyen du litre d'huile = R. 0.85 (Extrêmes 0.82-0.90)

Pourcentage moyen de tourteau = 40 vendu à cette époque Rs. 135 la tonne.

La vente de l'huile et celle du tourteau aux prix précités permettaient à l'usine de faire un léger bénéfice.

Le litre d'huile, emballage compris, se vendant aujourd'hui 35 cents le litre, il faudrait payer la tonne de pistaches Rs. 75.

A ce taux, nous allons voir que la même usine de pressage n'y trouverait pas son compte :

Par tonne de pistaches :

RECETTES :—				237 kilos huile à 35 cents	...	...	=	Rs. 82.95
				400 tourteau à 10 cents (prix actuel)	=	„	40.00	
								<u>Rs. 122.95</u>
DÉPENSES :—				Achat pistaches	...	...	75 Rs.	
				Coût préparation	...	...	45 „	Rs. 120.00
								<u>Rs. 2.95</u>

Le coût de la préparation comprend main-d'œuvre, combustible, administration etc.....

Il importerait de savoir si à Rs. 75 le planteur aurait profit à cultiver cette légumineuse qui exigerait les dépenses suivantes :

Achat semences
Préparation terrain
Ensemencement
Sarclages
Repiquages ou remplacements
Binages
Arrachage
Séchage
Emballage
Transport

Nous connaissons trop notre pays pour ne pas être assuré d'une surproduction si par hasard un planteur de pistaches venait à faire quelque profit. Le moyen de gagner de l'argent devenant de plus en plus rare et difficile, chacun saisit la première occasion qu'il croit favorable.

La conséquence d'une surproduction sera un abaissement des prix. M. Bonâme écrivait en 1909 : " La culture de la pistache ne prendra jamais une très grande extension à Maurice ; elle deviendra de moins en moins avantageuse au fur et à mesure que les plantations prendront plus de développement. Lorsque les produits seront suffisants pour la consommation locale, l'offre dépassant la demande, les prix pourront baisser, mais il a encore un grand vide à combler, et d'un autre côté la consommation de l'huile de pistache augmentera dans une certaine mesure et remplacera d'autres huiles importées de l'extérieur. "

Ce que M. Bonâme ne pouvait prévoir, c'étaient les conditions d'après guerre c. à d. la surproduction mondiale en tous genres et l'avilissement de tous les marchés. Aujourd'hui que l'huile de pistache étrangère est vendue 35 sous le kilo, emballage compris, il est extrêmement difficile à un cultivateur d'obtenir un prix rémunérateur, l'usinier étant obligé de tabler sur le cours de la marchandise étrangère pour écouler sa production. Nous l'avons démontré plus haut.

Le tableau suivant indique les quantités d'huile de pistache importée dans le pays et sa valeur. L'on verra qu'à partir de 1930 l'huile de soja a trouvé ici un marché favorable, cette matière grasse étant pratiquement au même prix que celle de la pistache.

Années	Huile de pistache		Pistaches en cosses		Soja	
	Quantité Tonnes	Valeur en milliers de roupies	Quantité Tonnes	Valeur en milliers de roupies	Quantité Tonnes	Valeur en milliers de roupies
1919	341	—	42	—	—	—
1921	458	—	—	—	—	—
1923	356	365	180	44	—	—
1925	910	725	719	156	—	—
1927	1176	922	169	39	—	—
1930	1207	683	234	33	497	302
1931	1448	595	156	23	96	42
1932	650	281	68	12	683	306
1934	684	192	147	21	930	291
1935	864	340	102	17	1402	615
1936	707	290	80	14	367	380

Prix du Kilo = R.

	Huile de pistache				Huile de soja
1923	1.00	—
25	0.80	—
27	0.78	—
30	0.56	0.60
31	0.41	0.43
32	0.43	0.44
34	0.28	0.31
35	0.39	0.44
36	0.41	0.44

Les quantités d'huile de pistache importée équivalent aux quantités suivantes de pistaches en cosses.

1931	...	...	...	5792 tonnes
32	...	...	...	2600 "
34	...	...	...	2736 "
35	...	...	...	3452 "
36	...	...	...	2828 "

Personne plus que nous, ne désire la prospérité de la Colonie. Mais connaissant suffisamment l'histoire agricole de notre pays, nous voulons que la culture de la pistache soit faite avec profit par ceux qui voudraient l'entreprendre. Le succès ne dépend que du Gouvernement. Il importe en effet qu'une taxe assez élevée frappe les huiles étrangères. Ce qu'on a fait pour le tabac, on peut bien le faire pour l'huile.

Les économistes diront probablement que l'on doit éviter d'accroître le coût de la vie, car si un certain nombre d'habitants tireront avantage d'une culture protégée, par contre la communauté en général aura à payer son huile plus cher. C'est là un autre côté du problème. D'ailleurs si les prix devenaient rémunérateurs pour les cultivateurs, il est probable que la production augmenterait au point d'encombrer le marché. A ce moment, seuls continueraient ceux produisant au plus bas prix.

Quelques Annotations pour le débutant à l'Usine

Les chaudières à vapeur sont des réservoirs d'explosif des plus puissants. Traitez les en conséquence.

Familiarisez vous avec la disposition et l'usage de toutes les tuyauteries, valves et robinets ayant trait aux chaudières.

Prévoyez ce que vous devrez faire dans des cas inattendus ; lorsque vous serez en difficultés, vous n'aurez plus suffisamment de temps pour réfléchir.

N'allumez jamais un feu sous une chaudière avant de vous être assuré du niveau de l'eau.

Ne mettez jamais en communication des chaudières dont les pressions ne sont pas sensiblement les mêmes. Un changement subit de pression dans une chaudière est dangereux.

Ouvrez très lentement les communications de pression. La dilatation, un coup d'eau ou le changement soudain de pression peut rompre votre tuyauterie.

Ne chauffez jamais une chaudière à pleine pression sans vous être au préalable assuré que sa soupape de sûreté fonctionne librement. Une sage précaution est d'aider la soupape à fonctionner lorsque la pression de la chaudière a atteint la moitié de la pression normale.

N'échangez jamais le réglage d'une soupape de sûreté sans autorisation spéciale.

Ne vous fiez jamais à la seule indication d'un manomètre pour effectuer un changement. Un tuyau bouché ou un manomètre déréglé peuvent vous induire en une erreur funeste.

Ne laissez jamais un dépôt de sédiment dans les verres ou dans les tuyauteries de l'indicateur de niveau d'eau. Vidangez les souvent. Méfiez vous d'une eau stationnaire dans les verres ou comme l'on dit : d'un niveau mort.

Ne serrez jamais un boulon ou un écrou d'une tuyauterie sous pression.

Ne frappez jamais sur une chaudière, un récipient ou une tuyauterie sous pression. Si vous pensez avoir le droit de vous tuer vous n'avez pas celui de tuer les autres.

Ne permettez jamais à des tiers de toucher à quoique ce soit dans la salle des chaudières. Celle-ci n'est pas non plus un lieu de promenade et encore moins de conversation.

Ne manquez jamais d'attirer l'attention de vos chefs sur un fonctionnement anormal d'une chaudière. Ce pourrait être l'indice d'une avarie ou d'un danger sérieux.

Ne faites jamais de réparations à une chaudière sans autorisation spéciale.

Demandez souvent conseil. Deux opinions valent mieux qu'une.

EMPLOI DU PHOSPHATE BI-CALCIQUE COMME DÉFÉCANT EN SUCRERIE.

Le phosphate bi-calciue dosant de 36 à 42% d'acide phosphorique soluble au citrate d'ammoniaque alcalin utilisé jusqu'ici avec tant de succès comme engrais surtout dans les terres acides peut être aussi employé comme défécant dans les jus de cannes.

Grâce :

- 1o. — aux qualités de ce produit absolument neutre.
- 2o. — aux 36% de chaux qu'il contient à l'état combiné.
- 3o. — à son extrême pulvéulence qui le rend soluble dans le vesou à froid.
- 4o. — à son pouvoir tampon qui agit favorablement sur les solutions, il précipite les impuretés en éliminant les gommes et les colloïdes et n'en-crasse pas les tuyauteries.

Son emploi donne enfin des jus clairs et limpides et facilite de ce fait tout le travail.

Dissous par les acides habituels des jus de diffusion et du vesou, le phosphate bi-calciue constitue tout d'abord un tampon remarquable, empêchant les variations brusques de la concentration en ions d'hydrogène des jus. De plus, les combinaisons insolubles qu'il donne avec les composés organiques en font un coagulant de tout premier ordre permettant de réaliser l'enlèvement complet des substances en suspension colloïdale.

L'examen ultra-microscopique des jus traités comme il convient par le phosphate bi-calciue, démontre les qualités exceptionnelles de ce sel employé comme défécant.

Actuellement les recherches en chimie sucrière portent surtout sur la diminution de la chaux dans l'épuration et sur l'élimination des substances en suspension colloïdale. Ces dernières donnent en effet lieu, surtout en sucrerie de canne, à des troubles de fabrication importants et à des pertes de rendement parfois considérables.

On peut être convaincu que l'emploi raisonné des phosphates et plus particulièrement du phosphate bi-calciue aidera considérablement les chercheurs dans cette voie.

On utilisera le phosphate bi-calciue de la façon suivante :

- 1o. — Chauffer le jus brut, tel qu'il sort des moulins, à environ 70° C.
- 2o. — Ajouter le phosphate bi-calciue délayé en lait dans un peu d'eau, à la dose de 6 Kgs de phosphate bi-calciue par tonne de cannes écrasée.

Le reste des opérations de chaulage et de défécation, chauffage etc.... exactement comme d'habitude.

Le phosphate bi-calciue est une poudre très fine. Il est insoluble dans l'eau pure, mais, en agitant, lentement, soluble dans le jus sucré.

Sous la forme actuelle de ce produit, la dissolution pourra se faire en cinq minutes et souvent même simplement à froid.

D. ADAM,
Ingénieur d'Agronomie Coloniale,
CHIMISTE.

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE—MAURITIUS

Revised forecast of the 1938 sugar crop

(Unit : 1 thousand metric ton)

Owing to weather conditions having been markedly below normal in August last, the growth index stands now at a figure perceptibly lower than anticipated at the end of May ; being 87 as against 89 at the end of May and 100 in 1937.

The calculated tonnage of cane is, in consequence, reduced to 2,460 thousand metric tons. On the other hand, the sucrose content of the cane is considerably higher than last year and with an average extraction of 11.3% of cane, the probable total sugar works out at 278 thousand metric tons.

The distribution according to districts and the comparison with previous years are given in the following table :

Districts	1938 Forecasts		1937	1936	1935	1934	1933
	Revised	Preliminary					
Pamplemousses & Riv. du Rempart	70	71	82.65	63.97	69.97	30.13	57.77
Flacq	42	42	48.16	49.98	44.15	30.87	41.37
Moka	36	37	37.72	43.42	35.76	29.30	40.08
Plaines Wilhems...	19	20	22.49	21.89	20.62	11.54	18.22
Black River ...	13	13	13.81	12.85	11.28	5.99	8.88
Savanne	47	48	51.76	52.13	45.34	32.66	44.48
Grand Port ...	51	51	57.23	56.10	53.38	38.37	50.66
Total ...	278	282	313.82	300.34	280.50	178.86	261.46

September 6th, 1938

M. KÖNIG,
Statistician.

STATISTIQUES

Marché des Grains

1938

				Septembre	Octobre
Riz	75 Kilos	...	Rs. 9.50	Rs. 9 50	
Dholl	75	"	11.00	" 11.00	
Gram	75	"	13 00	" 15.00	
Avoine	100	"	20.00	" 20.00	
Son	100	"	16.00	" 18.00	

Marché des Sucres

Le Syndicat des Sucres avait vendu les quantités suivantes au 15 Octobre 1938 :

COUPE 1938-39

81,530 Tonnes de Raws @ Rs. 5.40 les % livres.
22,350 " de Grade A @ Rs. 6.52 les % livres.
Moyenne générale — Rs. 5.63

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO DIVISION OF THE PHYSICAL SCIENCES

The following is a list of the members of the Division of the Physical Sciences, who are entitled to vote in the election of the President of the University of Chicago for the year 1955-1956. The names are listed in alphabetical order of their last names. The names of the members who are not entitled to vote are listed in alphabetical order of their last names. The names of the members who are not entitled to vote are listed in alphabetical order of their last names.

NAME	ADDRESS	DATE OF BIRTH	DATE OF DEATH
ALLEN, R. H.	1100 S. Dearborn Ave., Chicago 5, Ill.	1892	1954
ANDERSON, C. D.	1100 S. Dearborn Ave., Chicago 5, Ill.	1892	1954
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